

Perfection: An Elusive Goal

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Dedicated to the professor Jesús Felipe Parra (1931-2017), who spent his life transiting and facilitating the way to perfection in surgery, hoping that many were willing to cross it. Perseverant unshakable, it was unthinkable to expect him to accept a result that could be better. Not making concessions with the media terms were his main successes and his not a few disappointments. Fine clinical strategist, with fair game and in the field of differences, no doubt a formidable opponent.

The perfect is an enemy of the good, a powerful phrase of Voltaire, easy to remember and deeply rooted in Western thought. It is very complex, from the argumenta point of view, to dismantle its apparent certainty, but I confess that I have always had a certain reserve for the overlapping invitation to give up and its castrating instinct. It may be difficult for us to remember when it was the first time we heard it, but surely it will quickly come to our mind when we use it as an excuse to stop in the middle of an action because the result was good enough, abandoning any attempt to follow. Recognizing when something is good is as difficult as perceiving that

we have reached the threshold of the perfect. There must be a sensory element that needs to be developed, just as the desired rhythm and cadence is achieved on the bicycle on the asphalt or when a painter leaves the brush and decides that the canvas is perfect.

Observing someone in that feverish pursuit of perfection is a highly contagious element. When Armando Scanonne, a celebrated Venezuelan gourmet and engineer by profession, decided to resuscitate and leave the flavors of his childhood printed in his eternal book *Mi cocina, a la manera de Caracas*, he did it in search of perfection. Reluctant, as he himself has stated, dared to venture into the fire, it occurred to him to invite outstanding cooks to reconstruct the dishes that emerged from the kitchen of his house in the parish of Santa Teresa, as a way of preserving the Venezuelan culinary heritage. For that, during years, would obsessively do five to seven times each of the dozens of recipes included in his red book. To achieve perfection in the elaboration of the emblematic the Asado Negro, of a placid Crema de Apio or of the Carato de Guanábana, is not easy thing. With his mental structure as a mathematician, he managed each recipe to have exactly the weight, the cooking times, well, the method to achieve that perfection. This exhausting

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activity, impeccably described in *El Legado de Don Armando* by Rosanna Di Turi¹, has allowed today Venezuelan cuisine to have a robust documentary axis. From there the profusion of the magnificent Venezuelan chefs and new gastronomic proposals has multiplied in an interesting way. The culinary school of the Centro de Estudios Gastronómicos, directed by Professor José Rafael Lovera, is a classroom with a clear desire to reproduce our most delicious dishes and sow this land of brilliant cooks. In the same way as perfection is the flag of the great world-class chefs like Ferrán Adrià in Catalonia or Juan Mari Arzak in San Sebastián, that flag can be taken by anyone who decides to walk the winding and steep road to perfection.

But the achievement of an unsurpassed outcome requires a journey to the roots of knowledge in each field, which does not accept improvisations. When the master Jordi Savall initiated the project *Dinastía Borgia: Iglesia y poder en el Renacimiento*, in order to rescue and reproduce the music that accompanied this controversial family from 1238 with the Conquest of Valencia by King Jaime I until 1671, year of the death of Francisco de Borja, protagonist of the Battle of Lepanto, he had to immerse in the dusty archives of the Vatican and many libraries to find the original scores. It was also necessary to reproduce the almost extinct instruments of the time, in order to recreate the short Requiem of Joaquín Des Prez or the sound of music heard at the court of Emperor Carlos V. As can be seen in the documentary *Jordi Savall y los Borgia*², it can be understood that the magnificent result obtained by the musical groups *La Capella Reial de Catalunya* and *Hesperion XXI*, is not by chance. In his unwavering desire to obtain the perfect acoustics, typical of that historical period, Savall explains that it was necessary to record, at dawn, in the magnificent Romanesque collegiate church of Cardona Castle, in eastern Catalonia. For some it could be a gesture of radical purism, for others, a poignant commitment to excellence.

These models of optimal performance are increasingly available to those who want to know them as a way of inspiration. By simply entering that wonderful tool that is You Tube, you can live up close and personal from the preparation of an Everest expedition to the academic activity of the IRCAD laparoscopy school in Strasbourg. Learning from the Swiss precision of the Solar Impulse team, led by psychiatrist and pilot Bertrand Picard, who managed to turn the Earth on a plane powered by solar energy, is today easier than a few years ago. Likewise, enjoying the perfect performance of George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, with Yuja Wang³ on piano, is powerfully inspiring. A millennial with the perfect body of a gymnast, who bends abruptly to greet the audience in a gesture as if she were a fine Sevillian razor. An interpreter that takes us to a vertiginous route and when pressing the final note, has given us a bath of pure energy. When seeing her, it is very difficult to concentrate. Deciding to follow her agile hands by attacking the keys from the fortress of the perfect anatomy of her scapular waist or listening with the eyes closed is truly complicated. When Wang, with a sensual self-confidence and a syncopated dance on the bench, slides on the keyboard, when we see her face we perceive what it feels like someone who knows that reaches perfection and does not stay halfway, not even to please Voltaire and his followers. In the unmistakable message of her facial gestures, there is a serene pleasure, perhaps the sensation we all have had, at some point, as we approached perfection without fear and without reservations.

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References

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- 2) Jordi Savall y los Borgia. <https://youtu.be/SLZNXVwfXZY>.
- 3) Rhapsody in Blue, Yuja Wang . <https://youtu.be/1eMfkcGCuDE>